

The James Vance House
San Antonio, Texas.
Bexar Co.

HABS No. 33-A-1

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. 33

Historic American Buildings Survey
Marvin Eickenrodt, District Officer
San Antonio, Texas.

THE JAMES VANCE HOUSE
DWYER & NUEVA STREETS
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR CO., TEXAS

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The present owner and occupant of the building is the Farmers' Marketing Corporation, R. C. Kittel, Secretary. The property was acquired and occupied in April 1933, from the Campbell Realty Company, who had leased the place as a Farmers' Market since July, 1932.

From 1919 to 1932, occupants have been of a nondescript nature, some no better than squatters. It was spasmodically occupied as an artist's studio, rooming house, etc. Mrs. Mary Eugenia Vance Winslow, grand daughter of James Vance lived in the house until 1919, and sold it to the Campbell Realty Company in 1926.

There have been few alterations other than those in the nature of repairs on the house. The brick addition marked "A" on the drawings is comparatively modern and of no architectural value whatever. A number of things, especially ornamental features, have been removed since Mrs. Winslow moved out of the house, including the old brass gas-burning chandeliers, wrought-iron grilles for basement windows, wood blinds for other windows, certain mantels, etc. Practically all vestiges of the original surroundings, excepting flag-stone walks are gone, including fences, outhouses, gardens, etc.

The house and property remained in the possession of the Vance family until 1919, and after James Vance's death was occupied by Mrs. Winslow and her family until that date.

The construction of the original house was begun in 1850 and completed in 1854. John Fries is credited with being the Architect, and the character of mouldings, etc., by comparison with those in other buildings he is known to have designed, would indicate that he was. The house was built primarily by a stone mason and his two sons, assisted further by Indian labor.

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The builder, James Vance, and his brother John Vance came to San Antonio from New York in 1840, making short stops at New Orleans and Little Rock on the way. They soon established an important merchandising and banking house, and evidently were people of considerable wealth and culture. They owned a number of slaves, who remained with the family as servants after the Civil War; James Vance gave each of these servants a home and a small plot of ground after they became too old to work. It is known that the home was a social center of the ante-bellum period. Robert E. Lee and other notables were frequent guests and informal visitors.

All materials in the house except the stone, which is native limestone, were brought from New Orleans via Indianola, the old seaport of Texas. All structural lumber and wood trim are cypress, except stair railings which are walnut.

Besides being provided with an underground well and cistern in the yard, the house was equipped with a zinc-lined tank in attic space, designed to catch and store rain water, which was in turn piped to the various rooms. Silver faucets were recessed in the partitions and covered with small access doors.

Much of this information has been obtained from Mrs. Winslow, grand daughter of James Vance, Mrs. Sara Winslow Johnson, daughter of Mrs. Winslow, and Mrs. Rena Maverick Green, grand daughter of John Vance, all living in San Antonio today. Both Mrs. Green and Mrs. Johnson also lived in the house during their school days.

This house stands on the property which was being considered as an alternate site for the new San Antonio Post Office late in 1933.

Author L. H. Harrington

Approved Marvin Eickewroht